

# Woman with ALS denied euthanasia procedure day before scheduled death

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Martha Sepúlveda Campos had her assisted suicide appointment canceled a day before it was scheduled to take place.

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A Colombian woman suffering from ALS who was scheduled to undergo euthanasia was denied the procedure after the clinic that had agreed to perform the procedure determined she did not meet the criteria of a terminal patient, according to reports.

Martha Sepúlveda Campo, 51, was smiling and happy in the days leading up to her death, spending time with her family who supported her decision to escape her pain. Then suddenly, just one day before she was supposed to take her final breath, The Instituto Colombiano del Dolor reversed its decision, [Noticias Telemundo reported](#).

Sepúlveda would have been the first patient without an immediate terminal prognosis — those expected to live for six months or less — to undergo the procedure in the Colombia, which has a progressive stance on the issue.

Sepúlveda was diagnosed with the disease, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, in 2019.

The fatal disease is degenerative, affecting the nervous system over time eventually rendering mobility and even speech impossible. While deadly, many patients can survive months or years with symptoms.

“In the state that I have it, the best thing that can happen to me is to rest,” Sepúlveda said in [an interview with the Colombian television network Noticias Caracol](#).

Euthanasia has been decriminalized in Colombia since 1997, when it became the first country in Latin America to do so. However it has only been allowed for terminal cases, and not degenerative cases like ALS or Parkinson's Disease. The government did not give a regulation that would allow any form of euthanasia until April 20, 2015.

On July 22, the Colombian Constitutional Court extended the right to the procedure “provided that the patient suffers intense physical or mental suffering from bodily injury or serious and incurable disease,” [according to the EFE agency](#).

Sepúlveda asked for a permit days later, which was granted on Aug. 6.



The clinic decided that Sepúlveda does not meet the criteria of a terminally ill patient.

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“I am calmer since the procedure was authorized,” she said before Saturday’s reversal. “I laugh more, I sleep more calmly.”

According to Noticias Telemundo, her 11 siblings supported her decision as well as her son, who’d been with her in what she’d believed were her final days.

“I need my mother, I want her with me, almost in any condition, but I know that in her words she no longer lives, she survives,” Federico Redondo Sepúlveda told Noticias Caracol.

Sepúlveda's mother took issue with the plan for religious reasons, "but I think that deep down she also understands it," she said.

Religious leaders in Colombia, a majority Roman Catholic nation, condemned the court's euthanasia expansion, instead promoting caring for the sick and dying instead of offering them the procedure.

Sepúlveda said she had spoken about her decision with her pastors.

"I know that the owner of life is God, yes. Nothing moves without his will," she said.

She said that she thinks God "is allowing this."

Since euthanasia became regulated in 2015, Colombia has granted the request of 157 procedures in the country, according to data from the Ministry of Health, Noticias Telemundo reported.

For every five requests for euthanasia, only two are authorized, [says DescLAB, Laboratory for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#).